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## CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

## Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

Plan of Federation Recommended by The Interchurch Conference of 1905, Adopted by the National Assemblies of Constituent Bodies, 1906-1908, Ratified by the Council at Philadelphia, December 2-8, 1908, Amended at Chicago, December 4-9, 1912, and at St. Louis, December 6-11, 1916.

## Preamble

Whereas, In the providence of God, the time has come when it seems fitting more fuily to manifest the essential oneness of the Christian churches of America in Jesus Christ as their divine Lord and Saviour, and to promote the spirit of fellowship, service, and co-operation among them, the delegates to the Interchurch Conference on Federation assembled in New York City, do hereby recornmend the following Plan of Federation to the Christian bodies represented in this Conference for their approval:

## Plan of Federation

1. For the prosecution of work that can be better done in union than in separation a Council is hereby established whose name shall be the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.
2. The following Christian bodies shall be entitled to representation in this Federal Councii on their approval of the purpose and plan of the organization:

The Baptist Churches of the United States
The General Conference of Free Baptists
The National Baptist Convention (African)*
The Christians (The Christian Connection)
The Christian Reformed Church in North America*
The Churches of God in the United States (General Eldership)*
The Congregational Churches
The Disciples of Christ
The Evangelical Association
The Evangelical Synod of North America
The Friends
The Methodist Episcopal Church

[^0]> The Methodist Episcopal Church, South
> The Primitive Methodist Church
> The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America
> The Methodist Protestant Church
> The African Methodist Episcopal Church
> The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
> The Moravian Church
> The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.
> The Presbyterian Church in the U. S.*
> The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist or Presbyterian Church
> The Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Synod)
> The United Presbyterian Church
> The Protestant Episcopal Commissions on Christian Unity and Social
> Service
> The Reformed Church in America
> The Reformed Church in the U. S.
> The Reformed Episcopal Church
> The Seventh Day Baptist Churches
> The United Brethren of Christ
> The United Evangelical Church
3. The object of this Federal Council shail be
I. To express the fellowship and catholic unity of the Christian Church.
II. To bring the Christian bodies of America into united service for Christ and the world.
III. To encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the spiritual life and religious activities of the churches.
IV. To secure a larger combined influence for the churches of Christ in all matters affecting the moral and social condition of the people, so as to promote the application of the law of Christ in every relation of human life.
V. To assist in the organization of local branches of the Federal Council to promote its aims in their communities.
4. This Federal Council shall have no authority over the constituent bodies adhering to it; but its province shall be limited to the expression of its counsel and the recommending of a course of action in matters of common interest to the churches, local councils, and individual Christians.

It has no authority to draw up a common creed or form of government or of worship, or in any way to limit the full autonomy of the Christian bodies adhering to it.

[^1]5. Members of this Federal Council shall be appointed as follows:

Eerh of the Christian bodies adhering to this Federal Council shall be c.riticd to four members, and shall be further entitled to one member for every 00.000 of its communicants or major fraction thereof. Alternates may be chosen and certified to the Council in the same manner and to the same number as members to fill vacancies caused by the death, resignation, or permanent disqualification of members. Such alternates may also attend sessions of the Council in the absence of members and exercise all powers of members as temporary substitutes during such absence.
6. Any action to be taken by this Federal Council shall be by the general vote of its members. But in case one third of the members present and voting request it, the vote shall be by the bodies represented, the members of each body voting separately; and action shall require the vote, not only of a majority of the members voting, but also of the bodies represented.
7. Other Christian bodies may be admitted into membership of this Federal Council on their request if approved by a vote of two thirds of the members voting at a session of this council, and of two thirds of the bodies represented, the representatives of each body voting separately.
8. The Federal Council shall meet once in every four years and the term of service of the members or their alternates shall be four years or until their successors shall be appointed. Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee.
9. Section $a$. The officers of this Federal Council shall be a President, one Vice-President from each of its constituent bodies, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Executive Committee, who shall perform the duties usualiy assigned to such officers. Vacancies among the VicePresidents or in the Executive Committee may be filled by the Executive Committee on nomination by the representatives on the Executive Committee of the constituent body in which the vacancy may occur.

Section b. The General Secretary and other secretaries of the Council except the Recording Secretary shall be chosen by the Executive Committee, which shall have authority to fix their duties and their salaries, and they shall aid in organizing and assisting local Councils and shall represent the Federal Council in its work under the direction of the Executive Committee.

Section c. The Executive Committee shall consist of two representatives from each of the constituent bodies, preferably one minister and one layman, and one additional representative for every 500,000 of its communicants or major fraction thereof, who may be either a minister or layman, together with the President, all ex-Presidents, the Recording Secretary, and the Treasurer. The Executive Committee shall have authority to attend to all business of the Federal Council in the intervals of its meetings and to fill all vacancies, except that it shall not have power to make any amendments to the Constitution or to the By-laws. It shall meet for organization at the eall of the President of the Council immediately upon the adjournment of the Federal Council, and shall have power to elect its own officers.

Section $d$. All officers shall be chosen at the quadrennial meetings of the Council and shall hold their offices until their successors take office.

Section e. The President, the Recording Secretary, and the Treasurer shall be elected by the Federal Council on nomination by the Executive Cormittee, but nominations may be made from the floor of the Council by any member at the time of the election.

Section $f$. The Vice-Presidents and members of the Executive Committee and their alternates shall be elected by the Council upon nomination by the representatives in attendance of each of their respective constituent bodies.
10. The expenses of the Federal Council shall be provided for by the several constituent bodies.
(The foilowing paragraphs were recommended by Interchurch Conference of 1905, adopted by national assemblies of constituent bodies, 19061908.)
[This Plan of Federation shall become operaive when it shall have been approved by iwo thirds of the above bodies to which it shall be preseried.
[It shall be the duty of each delegation to this Conference to present this Plan of Federation to its national body, and ask its consideration and proper action.
[ $I_{n}$ case this Plan of Federalion is approved by two thirds of the proposed constiunt bodies the Executive Committee of the National Federaion of Churches and Christiar Workers, which has called this Conference, is requested to call the Federal Council to meet at a fiting place in December, 1908.1
11. This Plan of Federation may be altered or amended by a majority vote of the members, followed by a majority vote of the representatives of the several constituent bodies, each voting separately. Amendments to this plan shail be reported officially to the several constituent churches.

## BY-LAWS

1. The Council shall meet quadrennially on the first Wednesday of December, at such place and hour as the Executive Committee shall from time to time determine. The place and time of special meetings shall be determined by the Executive Committee.
2. The President of the Council, or in case of his absence, the last President present shall open the meetings with an address and devotional exercises, and preside until a new President is chosen.
3. The Recording Secretary and the Secretary, or Secretaries, to whom this duty may be assigned by the Executive Committee, shall make up the roll of the members in the Council from the certificates of the proper officers of the constituent bodies composing the Council, and no one not thus eertified shall be enrolled. The Council shall determine any question arising as to the validity of the eertificates.
4. No President or Vice-President shall be eligible to immediate reelection.
5. A quorum of the Council shall consist of two or more members from a majority of the churches entitled to representation. A quorum of the Executive Cormmittee shall be fifteen persons, and at least five denominations shall be represented.
6. The Council shall appoint a Business Committee, to which shall be referred all matters connected with the proceedings of the Council while in session, and all such papers and documents as to the Council may seem proper. It shall consist of two members from each church having twenty or more representatives in the Council, and one from each of the churches having a less number of representatives. The Council may also appoint such other special committees as to it may seem proper.
7. The business expenses of the Council, the expenses of its committees subject to the discretion of the Executive Committee, and the salaries of its officers, shall be paid out of the funds contributed by the churches, but the expenses of the representatives of the churches in the Councii shall not be a charge against the funds of the Council.
8. (1) The following Commissions, subject to the Executive Committee, shall be appointed to further the general purposes of the Federal Council as stated in its Constitution within the fields indicated by their respective names.
a. A Commission on Evangelism.
9. A Commission on the Church and Social Service.
c. A Commission on the Church and Country Life.
d. A Commission on Christian Education.
e. A Commission on Temperance.
f. A Commission on International Justice and Goodwill.
g. A Commission on Interchurch Federations (State and Local).
10. A Commission on Relations with the Orient.
i. A Commission on Relations with France and Belgitum.*
(2) Each Commission shall consist of twenty-five or more members appointed from the Christian bodies appointing members to the Council, by the President of the Council, and confirmed by the Executive Committee.
(3) The members of these Commissions shall serve four years or until their successors are appointed. The Commissions shall report annually to the Executive Committee, and oftener should the Executive Committee require, and quadrennially through the Executive Committee to the Federal Council.
(4) The President of the Council shall appoint the Chairmen of these Commissions, which shall have power to choose such other officers for the conduct of their affairs as may be authorized by the Federal Council or the Executive Committee.
(5) These Commissions shall not commit the Federal Council to any policy or expense until such policy or expense is approved by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council.
(6) The Commissions shall submit their proposed budgets to the Executive Committee, and upon the Committee's authorization of such budgets, may solicit contributions for their work under the direction of the Executive Committee and the Treasurer of the Federal Council.
11. The Secretaries chosen by the Executive Committee shall conduct the correspondence of the Council and of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall have full power to appoint, when necessary,

[^2]such Secretaries as it may deem advicable and to designate their respective relations and duties.
10. The Recording Secretary shall keep the minutes of the Counci1, and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may appoint such assistant secretaries as may be necessary for the transaction of business, both for the Council and for the Committee.
11. The Treasurer of the Council shall be the custodian of all the funds of the Council and the Committees, and shall perform the duties usually assigned to the office, shall give bond in such sum as the Executive Committee shall determine, and his accourit shall be annually audited under the direction of the Executive Committee.
12. The Executive Committee shall have authority to consider during the sessions of the Council or in the intervals between its meetings any business referred to it by the Council, and shall exercise generail supervision of all its affairs, and shall have authority to adopt its own rules for governing its own business. The Executive Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairman, or in his absence or disability, the call of three of the members representing three of the eonstituent bodies, and ten days' notice of meeting shail be given. Public meetings under the direction of the Executive Com mittee may be held annually in various sections of the country. The President shall also appoint the following Standing Committees to work under the direction of the Executive Committes:
(1) A committee on Foreign Missiuns, to number not more than fifteen members.
(2) A committee on Home Missirns, to number not more than fifteen members.
(3) A committee on Family Life and Religious Rest Day.

The Executive Committee shall have power to establish commissions or committess ad interim, which may become permanent by the approval of the Federal Council.
13. The minutes of the Council shail be published regulariy, under the editorship of the Secretary or Secretar ies to whom this duty may be assigned by the Executive Committee.
14. These By-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Council by a two-thirds vote of the members present.

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[^0]:    *Received into fellowship of the Council under provisions stated in Section 7 of the Constitution.

[^1]:    * Received into fellowship of the Council under provisions stated in Section 7 of the Constitution.

[^2]:    * Appointed ad interim by the Executive Committee. (Section 12.)

